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AUTHOR	McCarty, Tim; And Others
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ABSTRACT

The evolution of the University of Minnesota's program of student volunteers in the college union is described. The program draws on developmental theories, and suggest ways of integrating union program production and specific educational goals for the volunteers engaged in that production: individual autonomy, commitment of values, integration of knowledge, intellectual competence, interpersonal competence, moral maturity, and respect for persons. Sixteen life skills (adaptability, assertiveness, communication, creative thinking, critical thinking, decision-making, financial management, follow-through, implementation, initiative, planning, relationship-building, problem-solving, tolerance for risk, and tolerance for stress) were linked to the seven goals in the programs in which student volunteers participate. 16 references. (MSE)

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How to live

A development program for student volunteers

During the last 20 years, students have constantly insisted upon classroom experiences and curriculums that are relevant and meaningful. As educators, we must be prepared to articulate not only what we do but also why we do it. We should not expect student volunteers to invest themselves as programmers or as participants without a clear indication of expected outcomes. Thus, if we are to liken what we do to the educational mission of our institutions, we must clearly understand theories of human development as well as theories of student development.

The title of this article makes a strong claim. Does it seem a little much? Do we really teach students how to live? If so, what *do* we teach, and how is it related to the basic purposes of higher education? We believe we do teach every time we interact with union volunteers, but the very "hands-on" nature of our work—our practice—sometimes obscures our vision as developmental educators.

The human development program we propose honors practice and draws upon developmental theories; it suggests ways of bridging the gaps between union program production and an intentional set of educational ends for the volunteers engaged in that production. Bridging practice and theory remains a central problem in our profession. Most of us believe we are doing something of educational significance, but making connections between the details of program production and educational purpose is often difficult. Our model, while by no means complete, offers an approach to working with union volunteers that connects mission, educational goals, life skills, program production skills, teaching methods, and the concept of a learning environment. These linkages facilitate both program quality and the development of volunteers, and also provide "a way of seeing," which can greatly enhance our

Tim McCarty, Richard Melton, Bernie Molitor

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sensitivity to our role as educators. By being clear about our goals with students and being able to translate those goals intentionally to everyday experiences, we find our distinctive place in higher education.

This approach, beginning with practice and moving to developmental theory and back to practice, represents a progression and a method which the authors used, all the while unaware of Lee Knefelkamp's *The-Practice-to-Theory-to-Practice Model* (Knefelkamp & Rogers, 1981). After putting together a draft of our program, we attended a presention given by Knefelkamp at the 1986 ACU-I annual conference. Voila! There it was, in some ways more structured and specific than our model, and yet conceptually and practically quite similar.

History and development

In the winter of 1985, we formed a task force to articulate what we teach and how we teach it to our program volunteers. We involved an energetic group of students and turned to ACU-I's "Role of the College Union" statement for some grounding and fundamental purpose. The third paragraph of the statement speaks more directly to the issues of co-curricular education:

> *The union is part of the educational program of the college.*
> *As the center of college community life, it serves as a laboratory of citizenship, training students in social responsibility and for leadership in a democratic society.*
> *Through its various boards, committees, and staff, it provides a cultural, social, and recreational program, aiming to make free time activity a cooperative factor with study in education.*
> *In all its processes it encourages self-directed activity, giving maximum opportunity for self-realization and for growth in individual social competency and group effectiveness. Its goal is the development of persons as well as intellects. ("The Role of the College Union," 1964)*

This statement is admirable and inspiring, but it does not provide a road map of practical utility.

The phrase—"the development of persons"—became the pivot of our next step, which was to ask ourselves: What does a "developed person" look like. What characteristics of development would such a person possess? What is a "developed person," anyway?

This exercise was demanding; it forced us to probe our core beliefs about what we do. Each of us brought forth between six and eight goals. The list included wellness, identity, integrity, altruism, moral reasoning, a sense of competence, self-esteem, and self-actualization. There were 14 goals in all.

The goals comprised an array of ends and purposes reflected in a variety of developmental theories. Some of the goals were rooted in the psychosocial models of Arthur Chickering, Nevitt Sanford, and Erik Erikson; others reflected cognitive developmental models such as those of Lawrence Kohlberg and William Perry Jr.; still others were found in maturity models such as Douglas Heath's. However, no single theory captured all of what we wanted. This was both overwhelming and stimulating because it opened so many possibilities. Previous experience with applying Chickering's vectors to a union program group had shown us that a single theory was too limiting because of its incompleteness in relation to our educational goals. We preferred to use multiple theories because of the richness and variety which could better help us in the art of teaching.

Educational goals

After surveying the developmental literature, we went through a difficult process of definition, analysis, rejection, and inclusion, which led finally to our positing seven major goals basic to our unique mission and place within higher education:

1. **Autonomy.** The intellectually, morally, and psychologically autonomous person is able to think and act independently without continual reassurance and approval from

others and without excessive reliance on "authority" figures, including family, peers, teachers, advisers, or mentors. Autonomy is a necessary condition for the development of critical thinking and for the achievement of a sense of true interdependence based upon a solid and affirmative estimation of self.

2. **Commitment of Values.** The Commitment of Values involves the discovery and affirmation of a set of central life purposes and values which may be broadly moral, "spiritual," religious or non-religious, artistic, vocational, recreational, political, or social. One sometimes speaks of such a commitment as entailing the formation of a "philosophy of life," grounded in a thorough and reflective examination of alternative values and belief systems as well as a critical inquiry into one's own values, beliefs, and interests.
3. **The Integration of Knowledge.** The Integration of Knowledge is based on the ability to appreciate and understand the connections among the various fields of study—both their content and methods of inquiry. Such understanding should result in a much deeper knowledge of each of the disciplines as well as greater skill in applying that knowledge to everyday life, the experience of which is not sorted out into neat "curricular" categories.
4. **Intellectual Competence.** The intellectually competent person is able to think critically and creatively in the course of drawing conclusions, making decisions, and generating and developing ideas.
5. **Interpersonal Competence.** Interpersonal Competence is the ability to communicate and interact effectively and to initiate, develop, and maintain relationships with diverse individuals and groups.
6. **Moral Maturity.** The Morally Mature person acts in accord with a set of ethical principles and beliefs based upon concepts of justice and fairness. Moral maturity depends, however, as much on the cultivation of qualities of empathy and caring as on the operation of critical intellect.
7. **Respect for Persons.** Respect for Persons, which grows out of the capacity for caring, involves the ability to appreciate others for their essential humanity without bias with respect to race, class, gender, age, ethnicity, country of origin, sexual orientation, or physical disability. Respect for Persons results in the acceptance, affirmation, and celebration of human diversity.

These goals were subjected to considerable scrutiny and critique when first presented to our students and staff. Though the response was generally favorable, it was clear to us that we needed—and still need—to do more work, both conceptually and in respect to practical application. The following is a brief survey of some of the unresolved issues:

Wellness. We chose not to include wellness in our draft because it seemed to encompass an aggregate of goals and was closer to what Chickering calls integrity, which is more the result of the assimilation of a number of developmental goals. Wellness did not seem as useful or accessible in an instrumental way as the other goals.

Aesthetic Appreciation. Our union arts coordinator wondered what happened to appreciation of the arts—aesthetic appreciation or awareness. She rightly pointed out that she and her staff worked with many student program volunteers in film, literary arts, performing arts, and visual arts who had the opportunity to gain a greater awareness or appreciation of various art forms.

There is much to be said for her point of view. However, we did not describe all the possible content areas of union programming. We aimed, instead, to identify the most general and comprehensive educational outcomes of union volunteer experience. Aesthetic awareness can be considered a part of the Integration of Knowledge or Intellectual Competence or it can be related to Commitment of Values or Moral Maturity.

Global Awareness. It is a standard complaint that contemporary Americans, especially college students, lack adequate preparation as citizens of the world and are particularly deficient in their knowledge and appreciation of the interdependence of nations, peoples, economies, and environments. Certainly

the formal curricula of many colleges and universities document a new emphasis on internationalism and suggest a recognition of the problem of cultural ethnocentrism and isolationism. Unions, as part of extracurricular campus life, shape the leisure experience of college students, therefore contributing either to the problem or its possible solutions.

Should the development of such global awareness be a discrete educational goal for our volunteers? Is global awareness subsumed within Integration of Knowledge and Intellectual Competence? The answer to these questions again turns on how we see our educational goals. We looked at them as broad competency goals that included a variety of content. The matter is far from settled.

Identity and Integrity. In most of the developmental theories we examined, the concepts of identity and integrity surfaced in one form or another. They do not appear as educational goals in our final scheme for several reasons. In the various psychosocial theories of development—those that emphasize the evolution of the self through various stages within a social context—identity emerges as a core concept. In summarizing Erik Erikson's views, Knefelkamp, Widick, and Parker describe the "sense of identity" as: "experienced personally, validated interpersonally, and formed in the context of cultural norms. The person has a subjective core self-image which provides continuity and sameness; put simply, he knows who he is and can envision those qualities which are most central to his existence" (1978, p. 7).

Arthur Chickering, another psychosocial theorist from whom we drew extensively, included Establishing Identity in his original seven vectors of development but dropped the notion in his 1981 revision, which contained five vectors. Chickering acknowledges (Knefelkamp, Widick, & Parker, 1978) that identity is, paradoxically, both an elusive and pervasive notion difficult to distinguish from other development tasks or goals.

We departed from Erikson, Chickering, and others in viewing identity as more the *result* of all the educational outcomes, rather than as a distinct goal.

Integrity seemed to have a similar character. The integration of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors was, in our view, the *consequence* of achieving the educational goals, especially Commitment to Values, Moral Maturity, and Integration of Knowledge.

Bridging goals to life skills

Putting forth specific goals was significant progress in creating a usable program; certainly it was more useful to talk about specific dimensions of growth and change than about citizenship or "the development of persons as well as intellects." However, there remained a large gap between those goals and day-to-day program planning and production activities. How do the actual planning and production activities connect with goals? What behavioral competencies indicate positive, adaptive change?

In bridging this significant gap, we adapted a set of life skills developed by Kathleen E. Allen, former director of the Comstock Memorial Union at Moorhead State University. The decision to use Ms. Allen's life skills was terribly important because they are accessible, transferable to other life situations, and can be measured.

We modified the life skills to fit our environment better by adding assertiveness as a distinct item and by changing situational analysis to critical and creative thinking. Our current set of life skills numbers 16:

1. Adaptability. Tolerance and acceptance of others; the ability to relate to many types of

people and situations; to make transitions fluently; to be flexible.

2. Assertiveness. To speak for one's self in a clear, direct, and positive manner.
3. Communication—Non-verbal. The ability to be an effective observer and active listener; to recognize and understand body language.
4. Communication—Verbal. The ability to express oneself in writing and orally with clarity and effectiveness.
5. Creative Thinking. The ability to generate and develop new ideas and concepts. Involves thought processes such as theorizing, which is speculating on the basis of fact; imagining or forming mental images; visualizing, which is much like imagining but is based on a clearer advance notion of the image; and design, which involves conceptualizing and fashioning according to a plan. Thinking creatively does not necessarily follow a set of rules but it does lead to ideas which in turn can be analyzed critically.
6. Critical Thinking. The ability to gather and organize information relevant to the subject under study and analyze the information and the arguments that it contains, to develop hypotheses, and to construct convincing arguments of one's own. To be critical, such analysis would involve generalizing; drawing comparisons; separating large, complex ideas and problems into smaller, simpler ones; identifying unstated premises; generating questions from hypotheses; and detecting logical fallacies in arguments.
7. Decision Making. The ability to be objective and logical in making a decision; to be able to prioritize, take responsibility for decisions, and direct action resulting from one's decisions.
8. Financial Management. The ability to plan, develop, implement, monitor, and manage a budget.
9. Follow Through. The ability to stay on a project until completion, to be persistent, to recheck progress of others and help solve problems as they arise during each phase of task completion.
10. Implementation. The ability to plan the steps and time frame needed to accomplish a task; to select and organize appropriate human and material resources and delegate tasks; to manage the resources at the time and place of delivery.
11. Initiative. The ability to recognize an uncompleted task or potential opportunity or problem and do the job without being told; to be a self-starter.
12. Planning. The ability to develop informal and formal statements of purpose, plan potential uses of resources, identify the criteria for success in achieving goals.
13. Relationship Building. The ability to initiate, develop, and maintain relationships on a number of levels and in different situations.
14. Problem Solving. The ability to evaluate, assess, diagnose, generate alternatives, and anticipate needs.
15. Tolerance for Risk. The willingness to try something new, to experiment. To be able to make a decision which one hopes will be helpful but is without assurance of success or improvement and may result in failure.
16. Tolerance for Stress. The ability to cope, control emotional reactions and deal with failure, ambiguity, or success appropriately.

With these specific life skills in place, it became necessary to connect them with the seven educational goals. In some instances, this "wiring" process was obvious and relatively complete. For example, it was apparent that the life skills associated with autonomy included tolerance for stress, initiative, decision making, implementation, and follow through. The life skills central to the development of interpersonal competence included verbal communication, relationship building, tolerance for risk, non-verbal communication,

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tolerance for stress, and adaptability. The match-up was not as cogent or complete in other instances, such as moral maturity, respect for persons, and commitment to values.

Another positive and distinctive feature of life skills is that they open up another whole set of developmental theories: the typology models, such as the Myers-Briggs or David Kolb's Experiential Learning Wheel, which emphasize individual differences and learning styles critical to life skill mastery. Finally, life skills are eminently clear and attractive to a student charting his or her course in learning opportunities in a union setting.

Bridging life skills to program production

As college union staff, we are responsible both for providing a comprehensive and balanced program to our campus community and for the training development of volunteers who work in partnership with us to produce those programs. Ensuring that our volunteers acquire these life skills will help us to achieve these dual purposes.

But how is it that we link life skills with program production?

Following basic organizational orientation, volunteers typically get right into the think of programming. For the most part, they acquire or further develop skills by successfully performing the functions necessary to put a program together under the guidance of veteran volunteers and professional advisers; they learn primarily by observing and by doing. Each phase of programming requires one or more of the life skills we have identified.

The first step in program production is the setting of objectives. Of course, *critical thinking* and *decision making* are requisite skills for our volunteers, but *planning*, *problem solving*, and *verbal* communication are important as well in establishing the clear purpose which will guide future actions.

Program conceptualization requires volunteers to exercise *creative thinking* and *tolerance for risk* in the generation of ideas for programs, whether they are deciding the topic of a lecture, the genre of music for a concert, or the destination of a trip. Ultimately they must again use *decision making* skills in narrowing their choices.

The nuts and bolts of program production include budgeting; scheduling space, technical assistance, and equipment; and promotion. All of these important elements require successful program volunteers to be proficient at *implementation*. More specifically, budgeting requires that volunteers successfully employ the skills of *financial management*. Scheduling of tasks, personnel, and other resources involves *planning*, *decision making*, and *problem solving*. One hopes that *creative thinking* and *tolerance for risk* are also evident in the scheduling phases of production. *Creative thinking* is certainly an invaluable skill when it comes to program promotion; its effective employment is evident in well-planned and catchy campaigns which result in good turnouts for programs.

When the program finally occurs, success hinges again on the employment of the skill of *implementation*. But *problem solving* and *decision making* are also inevitably a part of the volunteers' experiences at the site of a program as is the *tolerance for stress* that is necessary to solve problems and make decisions.

Evaluation of programs by our volunteers demands *critical thinking* and *decision making* skills if the results are to be objective and meaningful.

Tolerance for stress is really one of those life skills of importance throughout the programming process, as are *initiative* and *follow through*. If effectively employed, these latter

two skills can virtually guarantee accomplishment of program objectives.

The other life skills of *verbal and non-verbal communication, assertiveness, relationship building,* and *adaptability* are the skills union volunteers must use most frequently in their interaction with one another, with audiences, with agents and artists, and with us. These skills enable them to relate to and communicate with different types of people in a wide range of circumstances.

The learning environment and teaching methods

Obviously the educational programs described here require a special kind of learning and teaching environment, one that is intellectually stimulating and open and that actively fosters and supports the pursuit of knowledge; one in which interdisciplinary approaches to the selection of program content are essential and where students, staff, and faculty are able and willing to engage each other in discussion and disagreement about the fundamental values and purposes of life. Risk taking and venturing are encouraged, and staff model critical and creative thinking as well as effective decision-making techniques. There is room for disagreement, constructive conflict, and the exploration of multiple points of view.

In such an environment, staff members are sensitive to group dynamics and have the ability to select positive and appropriate teaching methods. Certain methods quite obviously work better than others for a specific skill or competency. Lectures, written material, and discussion may work well for teaching information only, while simulation, coaching, and mentoring may be more effective in teaching practical application. Role modeling and advising may be best for shaping attitudes. The volunteer acquires the skills and competencies through the actual experiences of producing programs with other volunteers and professional staff. Self-assessment and reflection are supported and encouraged, and staff and volunteers give each other quality feedback and evaluation.

Achievement of the educational goals and acquisition of the life skills also require students, staff, and faculty to engage in discussion and debate about ethical issues. Staff should help students raise ethical questions as they surface in volunteer work groups and in committee meetings. Staff should help students to think through the application of ethical principles in day-to-day decision making. The learning-teaching environment should also emphasize emotional and empathic qualities essential for the ethical life. It is important that staff model and nurture an orientation of service and commitment to the university or college community and to all its citizens: students, faculty, staff, guests, and alumni. Mission and purpose of the organization should be paramount in the eyes of staff and volunteers, and values surrounding mission should be identified, clarified, discussed, and if necessary, debated. Citizenship and the exercise of social responsibility in the larger world are values that also ought to be promoted.

The environment should be as representative as possible of the world and of the variety of values and ways of life within it. The staff, trained in cultural pluralism, should not use racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic, or ethnocentric language in discriminatory behavior. Tolerance should be an organizational norm, and the affirmation and celebration of differences the ultimate goal.

Prospects for the future

The educational program for volunteers at the University of Minnesota is in its early stages and may well need further refinement and revision as we convert theory into practice and move back again to theory. As we develop the content of our life skills training program, we will discover gaps between what is required for the achievement of the broader educational goals and what exists in various training methods and materials. We will learn more about the connections between day-to-day program production and the acquisition of life skills.

"Union administration must be prepared to support a program in staff training and development that complements the educational program for volunteers."

The success of such a program, either at Minnesota or on your own campus, depends on the support of both students and staff, who must be committed to the vision of the fully educated person. Staff especially must have both the dedication to the goals and life skills and the required ability and training to move the student volunteers toward the achievement of those ends. As staff, we must recognize that our own development is incomplete, that we are not ourselves finished products, capable of teaching and modeling in all the ways required to make the program a success.

Union administration must be prepared to support a program in staff training and development that complements the educational program for volunteers. This final commitment is perhaps the single most important ingredient for success, without which the grand ideals of the ACU-I Role Statement will remain lifeless on the wall. Those ideals are worthy of our best, and that is what we should give.

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Tim McCarty is associate director of the University Center at the University of South Florida in Tampa. Before moving to Florida, he was assistant director of the St. Paul Student Center at University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

Richard Melton is senior program coordinator at Coffman Union, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. Since 1980, his responsibilities have included, among other areas, Issues and Ideas programming, Leadership Training, and Volunteer Development.

Bernie Molitor is director of volunteer development for West Bank and Coffman Unions, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. He is an honorary member of ACU-I's Student Development Advisory Team.